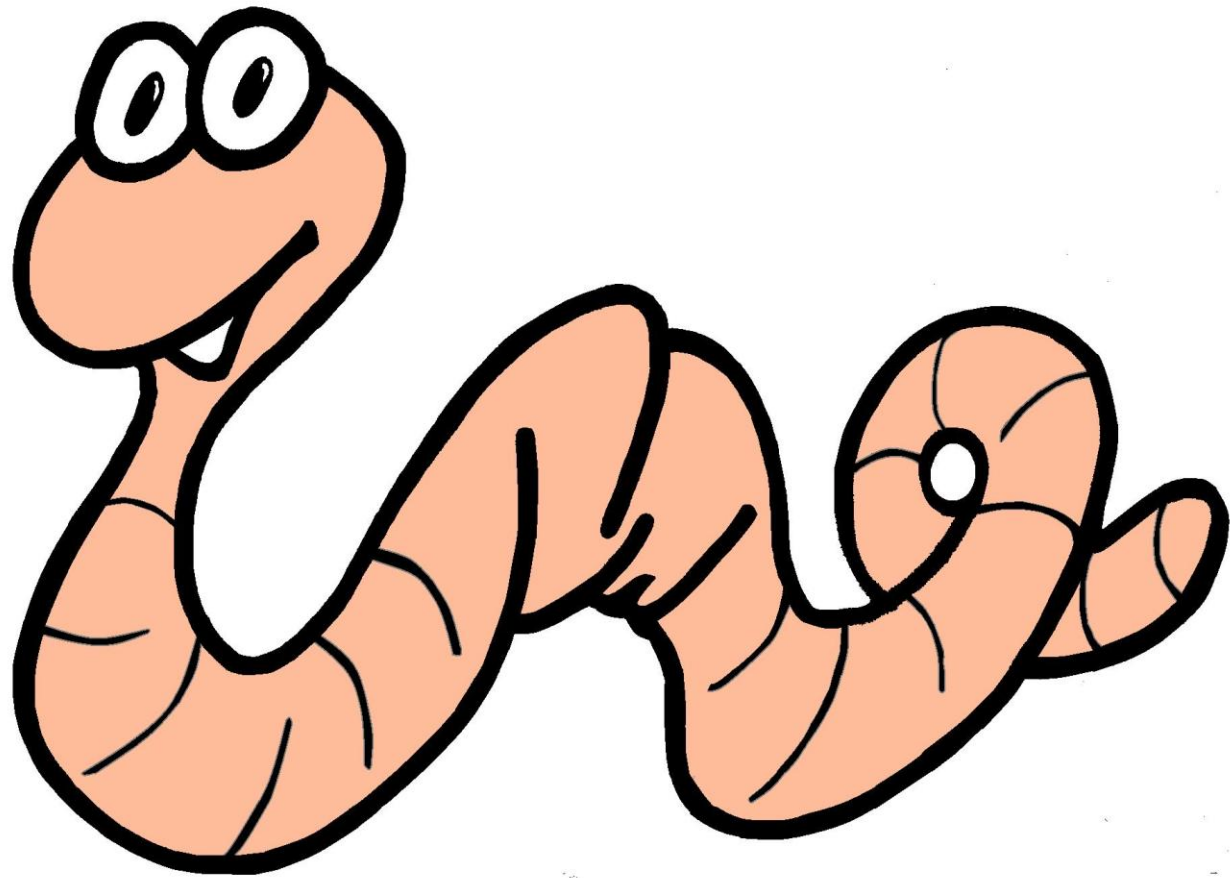




WARP Operators' Forum

Matt Smith, Chair

WARP Annual Forum – Sep '09





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Computer virus cripples council's work for weeks

Felix Allen
03.09.09

A computer virus crippled a London council for weeks after a worker accidentally plugged an infected memory stick into a computer.



Infected memory stick caused virus to spread rapidly, forcing council to cut internet and phone links to preserve core systems

The virus spread rapidly, forcing Tory-run Ealing council to cut internet and phone links to preserve "core systems and data".

Further shutdowns followed when the network was reinfected twice in the next week, and all terminals had to be rebuilt or replaced.

This left cash-strapped Ealing with a £501,000 bill for the emergency recovery and in lost revenue. But a report being considered by councillors tonight warns the final cost could top £1.1 million if a new computer security system is needed.

Julian Bell, leader of Ealing's opposition Labour group, said: "This incident put the whole of the council completely out of action for almost a week.

"Everything came to a grinding halt and it badly affected public services. This report confirms my concerns, despite repeated past assurances to the contrary, that the council was not properly prepared, and in the current climate we cannot afford to lose this sort of money."

Lib-Dem councillor Gary Malcolm, who is also an IT specialist, said: "I will be calling for heads to roll. Half a million pounds is a hell of a lot of money to throw away at a time the council says it is strapped for cash. If this had happened in a private company, people would be sacked."

The incident happened in May when an unidentified worker plugged the memory stick into a computer at the council's social services and housing department in Southall.



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